Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you my Eighteenth Annual Report upon the sanitary condition of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

Births. During the year 1898 the number of births registered was 427, giving a birth-rate of 22·4 per 1000 inhabitants, the rate for the previous year being 23·4.

Deaths. The number of deaths registered during the past year was much below the average, being only 221, as compared with 266 registered during 1897, and giving the unprecedented low death-rate of 11·6 per 1000 inhabitants. The number of deaths of infants under one year of age was also much less than in the previous year, there being 35 registered, which number gave a rate of 81·9 per 1000 births, whilst in 1897 it was 94·5. Of the remaining 186 deaths 110 had attained the age of 65 years. The number of deaths occurring in the Union Workhouse was only 11; in the preceding twelve months the number was 25. Two were due to Phthisis, one (an infant) to accident, and four had attained the age of 65.

Deaths from Zymotic Diseases. The number of deaths registered as being caused by any of the zymotic diseases was again very small during the year 1898, being only 10, the same as in 1897, whilst 22 were recorded in 1896. Five were registered as being due to Diphtheria and 5 to Diarrhœa.

No death occurred in the Union Workhouse from any zymotic disease.

Outbreaks of Infectious Disease during 1898. During the year 1898 there were notified 86 cases of infectious disease, this number comparing favourably with the 109 notified during 1897. The greater part by far were cases of Diphtheria (35) and Scarlet Fever (38).

Small-pox. No case of Small-Pox has occurred within the Rural District of Plomesgate during the past year.

Scarlet Fever The number of cases of Scarlet Fever notified during the year was 38, and of this number 22 occurred in connection with an outbreak in the parishes of Rendham, Sweffling and Benhall. The other parishes in which cases occurred were Saxmundham (1), Orford (2), Hacheston (5), Framlingham (6), and Kenton (2). The outbreak in the parishes of Rendham, Sweffling and Benhall commenced, I believe, in the first-named parish in January, and although the schools were closed and other precautions taken to stop the spreading of the disease, cases occurred at short intervals until the the end of March. One of the two cases at Orford received infection from Ipswich, and the disease was confined to the two houses in which they occurred. The five cases at Hacheston were members of one family, and were infected, I have no doubt, by communication with a relative who was nursing some friends at a distance who were suffering from this disease; strict attention was given to the use of disinfectants and to isolation, and I think it was very gratifying that the disease did not spread beyond the one house, as it was in the midst of others containing children.—Six cases occurred at Framlingham during the year, in separate houses. I could trace no connection between them, nor could I ascertain where they had been exposed to infection.—The two cases notified from Kenton occurred in one house and spread no further, but I am of opinion that there had previously been other very mild cases in the parish. No death occurred from this disease.

Diphtheria. There were 35 cases of Diphtheria notified during the year, and occurring in 8 different parishes viz: Saxmundham (12), Iken (12), Tunstall (3), Cransford (3), Cretingham (2) and one each at Wickham Market, Sudbourne and Farnham. The twelve cases at Saxmundham occurred in various parts of the town, and did not appear to be connected, as they were distributed over the whole year. In some cases it was attributable to defective drains, and in others to a very wet condition of the soil around the houses. The outbreak at Iken commenced in a cottage on the edge of the marshes in October, and I am of opinion that this was the cause of the outbreak, as there are some foul ditches, close to which the children had been in the habit of playing. The twelve cases were contained in three different houses, and 3 deaths were registered in connection with the outbreak. The 3 cases, which occurred in two houses, at Tunstall were of a mild character and I was unable to account for their appearance. The cases at Cransford and Cretingham were, I believe, caused by defective drainage; the cases occurring at Wickham Market and Farnham were imported, but I was unable to assign a cause for the case at Sudbourne. Besides the 3 deaths already referred to, two others were registered from this disease.

Enteric Fever. There has been a marked decrease in the number of cases of Enteric Fever during the past year, only 3 cases being notified, one case occurring in each of the parishes of Framlingham, Kettleburgh and Rendlesham. No cause could be found for the two first, but in the third the person was taken ill after visiting the seaside, where he had been partaking of oysters. No death was caused by this disease during the year.

Erysipelas. Seven cases of Erysipelas were notified during the year occurring in six different parishes. No death was registered from this disease.

Puerpural Fever. Two cases of Puerpural Fever were notified during the year 1898.

Whooping Cough. There has been a marked absence of this disease throughout the year 1898.

Measles. During the past year there has been a large number of cases of Measles in most parts of the district, especially in Brandeston, Cretingham, Kettleburgh, Eyke, Cransford and Glemham Magna; the schools being closed in these parishes for several weeks in consequence. The disease did not appear in a severe form, and no death was registered as being due to it.

Influenza. Cases of Influenza occurred at times over the whole District during the year 1898, but at no time did it assume the form of an epidemic. Six deaths of aged persons were attributed to this disease.

Diarrhœa. Diarrhœa has not been at all prevalent during the past year, but there were several cases amongst infants during the summer and autumn months, and 5 deaths were recorded as being caused by the complaint.

Phthisis. During the past year 17 deaths were registered as being due to Phthisis, being 7 less than the number occurring from the same disease during the previous year, and I notice that this disease has been on the decline for several years.

Precautions taken to Prevent Disease Spreading. I have visited every fresh outbreak of infectious disease as early as possible.

I forward printed instructions to each house upon receiving a notification that a case has occurred. I cause all collections of refuse to be removed, and examine the drains and water supply. Isolation is carried out as well as it is possible to do so in the various dwellings, disinfectants are supplied where necessary, and directions given as to the disposal of the excretions. I always instruct that the house and articles of clothing should be disinfected as soon and as thoroughly as possible.

Water. During the year 1898 the water supply of the district was much below the average, causing a considerable amount of inconvenience in some localities, but the shortness of the supply did not appear to affect the general health. During the above period I examined 48 samples of water, and found 9 unfit for drinking purposes.

The water from the pump in Middle St., Wickham Market, is still of such a character as to be unused by those living in the neighbourhood.

Overcrowding During the year 1898 it was found unnecessary to take any steps in any case of overcrowding

I have visited, during the year, nearly all the slaughter houses in the district, and found them in a cleanly condition.

I have also visited the common lodging houses at Framlingham and Saxmundham and found them in a cleanly and satisfactory state.

The Drainage Scheme for Saxmundham has not been carried out during the past year, but the subject is still under consideration.

The Sanitary Inspector's Report shows that there were during the year 47 nuisances abated, 5 new privies were built and 13 repaired, there were 3 new wells sunk and 9 cleansed and repaired.

I append tables A and B showing births, deaths, and new cases of infectious disease classified according to age, locality and disease.

I beg to remain, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

J. Corry Keer.

Medical Officer of Health to the Rural District Council of Plomesgate.